



## **Justification and Justice**

How can the gospel of justification by grace and the summons to do justice be related? Both are rooted in Scripture. Both are necessary in the proclamation of the church. The Reformation rediscovered the former and placed it front and center in Christian proclamation. The accent was placed on the unconditional, justifying grace of God by which a person, any person, is declared righteous who accepts God's free gift extended in Jesus Christ. One need not "do" anything to "achieve" righteousness before God.

On the other hand, there is the summons of the Scriptures to "do justice." This summons has been sounded forth in the church at various times and places, but perhaps at no time more than today, and particularly in Latin America. Thus it is said that God does indeed call upon us to "do" something, and that is to work for righteousness or justice in the world. God does not simply declare us righteous; God also calls us to seek righteousness in the world.

There are at least two ways of relating the two themes. One is to say that by means of justification a person is set free from any and all preoccupations with seeking God's favor and is thereby directed to the world to seek justice for all of God's children. Another is to say that justification and justice belong together in the singular action of God to set things right—both in the divine-human relationship and in the relationship between people—liberating people from death and recreating life for all; and so the gospel of justification without the summons to justice fails to attend to the totality of the biblical witness concerning God's work and will.

The Reformation accent and heritage seems to favor the first approach. But must it? If so, does the Reformation heritage tend to hinder the quest for justice? Or does it in fact serve that quest in ways that have not yet been fully explored? Or, on the other hand, is it being true to the Scriptures, and thus to the Reformation too, to adopt the second view? Or does that mean the possible loss of the proclamation of the gospel, and so also the loss of true liberation, and falling into the captivity of ideologies?

The justification and justice debate takes place in the pages which follow. Most of the essays were prepared for a Consultation on Justification and Justice held December 7-14, 1985, in Mexico City under the auspices of the Division for World Mission and Inter-Church Cooperation of The American Lutheran Church. A report of the consultation is given in the next essay by the director of the DWMIC, Dr. Mark Thomsen. Thirteen papers were presented, and written responses were given by thirteen other essayists. For reasons of space, it was not possible to publish all the papers in this journal, and we have published none of the responses. We have chosen those which we think would have most interest to the regular readers of this journal, seeking also a balance between Latin American and North American writers and between women and men. Moreover, three articles appearing in this issue were not presented at the consultation.

The first is the introductory essay by Dr. Thomsen. Another is the “Texts in Context” essay by Professor David Tiede, a participant and respondent at the consultation, on justification and justice in Luke 4. Finally, the article by Professor Richard Lischer has been included to provide our regular readers with a helpful resource beyond the immediate subject.

Special thanks are extended to the staff of the DWMIC for making these essays available to us and for many details in planning this issue, particularly Mark Thomsen, Director, and David Nelson, former Secretary for Latin America and the Middle East.

Inquiries concerning the full report and copies of all essays and responses from the consultation should be directed to the Division for World Mission and Inter-Church Cooperation, The American Lutheran Church, 422 South Fifth Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415.

A.J.H.